

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) submitted the following statement during debate of the Iraq War supplemental funding bill. Price voted against the bill, which he faulted for not including provisions to bring about an end to the war. He noted, however, that the bill includes important benchmarks for political progress in Iraq, and he pledged to continue applying pressure on the President to change his failed war policy.

The bill passed the House last night by a vote of 280-142. The Senate also passed the bill and it now awaits the President's signature in order to become law.

"Mr. Speaker, today we are asked to vote for a fourth time in two months on legislation to provide funding for the ongoing military mission in Iraq.

"The tally of this vote will reflect the dilemma facing this Congress as well as the American people. We are torn by two deeply held sentiments: on the one hand, we support our troops and want to make sure they are protected and supported in the field of battle; on the other hand, we are frustrated by a failed war policy and a President too stubborn to change course.

"I voted against giving the President the authority to wage war in Iraq. I have introduced legislation to place a termination date on that authorization and to require the President to formulate and execute an exit strategy. But I have consistently voted for bills to fund the war effort because that funding is essential to our troops in the field. Over the last two months alone, I have voted three times for funding for the troops in different versions of a supplemental appropriations bill. But I will not vote YES today.

"In addition to funding troop needs, the previous versions of the bill – despite differences among them and the compromises they contained – would have made substantial progress toward bringing this war to an end. The legislation before us today takes some modest steps forward by including benchmarks for progress for the first time and requiring the Administration to report on whether its strategy is achieving them. Unfortunately, however, it does not advance us nearly far enough toward ending this war and putting Iraqis in charge of their own governance and

defense.

"The progress the bill does make has been the result of the pressure brought to bear by the prior supplemental votes. I will be voting against this bill as a way of helping maintain and increase that pressure.

"Let no one mistake the significance of the vote we take today. This fourth vote is not primarily about material support for the troops – every member of this body supports our troops. This vote is fundamentally about the future of our policy in Iraq.

"Even if this bill were to fail today, the result would not be a cut-off of funding for the troops. The result would be to force the Administration to give ground it should have given long ago, and that, sooner or later, I believe it will be forced to give by this Congress.

"There is nothing about our military strategy that can solve what are fundamentally political and sectarian conflicts among Iraqis. Military and intelligence leaders have consistently declared that the solution in Iraq will be political and diplomatic in nature, not military. We have increasingly asked the military to work toward goals that military force cannot achieve: political agreements between intransigent Iraqi leaders, equitable sharing of power and resources, and an end to sectarian-based civil war. In the meantime, our presence has become a provocation for insurgency and a magnet for international terrorism.

"We have, in short, left our troops in an impossible situation. I am not willing to vote to fund their operations without at the same time compelling a change in policy that will bring them home.

"The struggle to change the U.S. course in Iraq is not over. The American people are speaking loudly and clearly. Our efforts over the last two months have moved the debate in the right direction, and we will continue exerting pressure on the Administration to alter its course in the days and weeks to come as we consider other legislation related to the war. In fact, it should not escape notice that we also passed today a resolution requiring consideration of legislation in September that would require an end to the occupation of Iraq.

"Our goal in considering the President's supplemental appropriations request was to confront the President over his failed policy and to force a change in course. Even as this supplemental legislation likely passes into law, we can be confident that we have taken important steps toward this goal. We have demonstrated to the Administration that it can no longer proceed with its failed policy unaccountably. While many in the House and the other body, where the power of filibuster can be used to obstruct progress, have resisted efforts to craft a more effective Iraq policy, the President and his allies in Congress have been put on notice that the tide is turning.

"I regret that this bill will not immediately bring the change to our Iraq policy that we so desperately need. But it does represent one more turn of the screw. The President should recognize that a growing number of Members of this Congress, and a clear majority of the American people, will continue boring deeper toward the heart of his failed policy. And we will not stop turning until our troops begin to come home."

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